

THE
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Αἰδοῦμαι μὴ εἶναι, ΜΕΓΑΛΟΤΙΜΟΝ. ————— HOM. OD.
Pray, Mr. COUNTRY SPECTATOR, who are you?

EGOTISM is a fault in writing, which it was reserved for modern ages to discover and to condemn. The Ancients seem not to have been delicate in speaking of themselves in the first person: and their sovereign Critics, *Aristotle* and *Longinus*, *Cicero* and *Quintilian* have no where, that I recollect, censured this presumption. At the present day the case is far different. We live in an age, in which the love of literature is not peculiar to any class of mankind, but in which almost every man lays some claim to the praise of taste and science. Amidst such a multiplicity of indiscriminate pre-

tensions, some must of necessity be weak and frivolous; and many must be founded on remarks, which are obvious, and on discoveries, which are unavoidable. Of these remarks and of these discoveries none is more easy than the detection of Egotism: this requires no penetration, no accuracy of decision, but here every man alike is a judge in the question before him. It would be a curious subject of inquiry to trace Criticism thro' its several gradations;—to pursue it from its comprehensive grasp of the whole to its petty consideration of parts, to descend from the analysis of sentiment and the exercise of judgment to the censure of tautology, and the enumeration of particular words. But such discussions do not lie within the province of a Country Spectator: the discerning Reader will easily perceive for what purpose the foregoing observations are introduced; they are intended to lessen the odium of a fault perhaps already committed, or which may sometimes be discoverable in the prosecution of this work. At the same time it may be proper to observe, that it is the prescriptive right of every Periodical Essayist to speak of himself *egotistically*. Old *Spec*, who was not deficient in modesty, has exercised this privilege thro' almost every page of eight volumes: nor have his successors been more cautious of disgusting their Readers. They, who have pursued other paths of literature, have contrived various methods of escaping the charge of Egotism; but the only expedient,

which I shall now mention, is that employed by a celebrated writer of the present day. In his life of JOHNSON, his usual method of designating himself is to say *this writer*, or the *present author*; a mode of phraseology, which is known to be very good *Greek*, but which is not universally allowed to be authorized *English*. There are many other ingenious devices, which modest Gentlemen have hit upon, that they might not seem to talk of themselves, when they have been talking of nothing else: but these I shall dismiss in silence, it being my only wish in offering these remarks, to exculpate myself, if in the course of the present or any future paper a *certain pronoun* should frequently occur, and to admonish the dealers in Critical small-wares not to be offended, if I assert the indisputable prerogative of a Periodical Writer.

It has been usual among authors of the same tribe with myself, to oblige their Readers at their first outset with some account of their own persons, habits and manner of life: and yet their object has been rather to excite, than to gratify, curiosity. They have not published their names, but have described their associates; they have not declared the profession, to which they have belonged, but have pointed out the vicinity of their residence. As I am no friend to innovation, under whatever mask it may be concealed, unless it demonstrably answers some important end, I will not violate a custom

established by my predecessors, but shall proceed to inform my Readers, not so much who I am, as *who I am not*.

FROM my having assumed the title of Country Spectator it might, perhaps, be imagined, that I aspire to the praise of some qualification, which has distinguished my great namesake from all his followers. Excellence, however, is rarely imitable: and even in the few instances, in which Copyists have been successful, they have acquired little applause. My ambition, therefore, shall be directed to a different object, than that of servile imitation: and, accordingly, I assure my Readers (at the same time entering a caveat against all witticisms levelled at my reputation) that no two animals were ever more unlike each other, than are the Town and the Country Spectator.

To begin, then, my negative description of myself, I possess no one of the peculiarities, which drew on the great Spectator the smiles of his acquaintance, or any of his properties (except that of *meaning well*) which have raised him in the estimation of the Public.—As to the former of these, I do not think that I was ever observed to have a short face; on the contrary I have sometimes been remarked to have had a long one. My natural propensity is rather to gravity than to mirth; and I have always preferred the sober feast of reason in the company of a

few friends, to the bursts of laughter and the shouts of merriment. At present, I am removed to such a distance from my old companions, as to be precluded from literary intercourse. I have, therefore, of late wooed Solitude in her retreat; and tho' I have mixed with all companies, into which I have been invited, I have seldom suffered a day to elapse, in which I have not paid a solitary visit to some place of retirement in the neighbourhood of my residence. It was in one of these walks (I know not how auspiciously) that I planned the COUNTRY SPECTATOR.

TACITURNITY, another peculiarity, which distinguished the original *Spectator*, is a virtue, as a *Pythagorean* would term it, to which I have little pretence. Conversation, both from the lasting advantages and the temporary pleasure, which it yields, has ever been my delight; infomuch, that into whatever company I chance to fall, if I do not converse with those who are near me, my silence must be ascribed to my utter want of information on the subject discussed by them.

FROM the best conjectures, which I am able to form concerning the future events of my life by a retrospect of those which are past, I do not think it probable, that I shall ever be made a Secretary of State, or be blest with the Right Honourable love of a dowager Countess. My ambition, too, is of a humbler

kind; and it rarely happens, that men are elevated to exalted stations, without having discovered a restless impatience of obscurity, and without having made repeated efforts to rise. My present situation, tho' not very conspicuous, is more so than it might have been: in the Town, indeed, in which I live, I am as well known by persons of all ranks and conditions, as if I were the Curate of the Parish.—

THAT I possess not the genius or learning of my illustrious predecessor, is probably, already evident to those, who have seen my first paper. Nature has cast me in a very different mould; and yet, perhaps, were I to complain of her unkindness to me, I might be thought by those, who best know me, to be querulous without reason, and to ascribe my numerous deficiencies to a wrong cause. I have ever from my childhood felt a passion for letters, and have, during certain intervals, pursued my favorite studies with the ardour of Youth struggling for pre-eminence and future fame: yet being of a listless disposition, too irresolute to endure fatigue, and too fickle to persevere in my pursuits, my acquirements fall far short of those, to which my emulation had taught me to aspire. I am not, however, yet arrived at those years, in which endeavours are rendered fruitless, and the hopes of improvement are vain: nor can I omit the present opportunity of reminding my young Readers, who feel a desire of excellence, while they are giving to idle amusements the hours,

which cannot be recalled, that our ambition will often survive our powers of exertion, and reproach us with that obscurity, into which indolence has sunk us, never to emerge!

As I bear no resemblance to the personage, whose name I have assumed, it may raise an inquiry among the curious, why I have thus chosen to call myself the *Country Spectator*. It is not an easy part of the task allotted to a Periodical Writer, to find a title for his Papers. Almost every term, which expresses desultory observation and social Philosophy, has been anticipated by former Essayists. We have seen *Ramblers* and *Idlers*, *Loiterers* and *Loungers*, *Speculators* and *Triflers*; so that to discover a new appellation for a course of Essays is scarcely less difficult, than it is to collect new remarks on life and manners. I had not indeed, forgotten by what name the inhabitants of the adjacent counties were known amongst the Ancient Geographers; and I had almost resolved to give some title to my Volume, which had reference to the **Coritani*. But maturer reflection has convinced me, that my choice would have been injudicious; with the majority of those, among whom my Papers are distributed, the mysterious air of my title-page might have been an obstacle in the way of my success; some men might have charged me with pedantry and an affectation of hard

* The Roman name of the inhabitants of *Lincolnshire*, *Nottinghamshire*, &c.

words, and would therefore have consigned me to oblivion; whilst others might have suspected me to be a sower of sedition, who had concealed his evil designs under a cabalistical signature. For these and other reasons, I determined to be explicit with my Readers, by assuming such a title, as might illustrate my design. At the same time I wish to caution them once for all, not to form any invidious comparison, which my name may suggest. All who have the same surnames, are allowed to be descendants from one common patriarch, tho' they inherit none of the qualities, for which he is famed; and thus I, who possess no part of the excellence of the primitive Spectator, may be suffered to bear his name without exciting indignation, and may pass for one of his humble relatives or his—*Cousin* in the COUNTRY.

A Card.

THE C. S. is happy in noticing the numerous sale of his Papers in * * * and its environs; and he hopes that the example of his Townsmen will not fail to spread its influence thro' his whole district.

R.